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RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY 0299  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1051  
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY 0567  
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO PRIORITY 0987  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 1271  
RUEHLA/AMCONSUL BARCELONA PRIORITY 2280  
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0170  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0276

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 003014

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WHA FOR A/S SHANNON AND PDAS SHAPIRO  
EUR/WE FOR ALLEGRONE, CLEMENTS, AND CERVETTI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/07/2016

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SP](#)

SUBJECT: SPAIN/VENEZUELA: ETA ISSUES SPARK SPANISH ANGER

Classified By: DCM Hugo Llorens for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) Only hours after Spanish President Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero and Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos had called to congratulate Hugo Chavez on winning his second presidential term on December 4, all major Spanish media outlets seized on a report from Basque news agency Vasco Press that Venezuela would extend citizenship to four Spanish members of the terrorist group ETA in order to prevent their extradition to Spain. Further, Venezuela would pay two other Spaniards 325,000 Euros each for emotional damages resulting from Venezuela's 2002 extradition of the two members to Spain to face terrorism charges. The 6 individuals are collectively suspected in connection with 40 ETA-sanctioned murders and dozens of terrorist attacks in Spain.

¶2. (U) Caught completely off guard, the Spanish Foreign Ministry issued a statement December 4 saying it had no knowledge of such an arrangement and would be in contact with the GOBRV. The announcement came at a particularly difficult time as President Zapatero faces mounting criticism for his management of the still nonexistent ETA peace negotiations. It provoked outrage and disbelief in Spain across the political spectrum.

¶3. (U) By the evening of December 5, Spanish media outlets were reporting from Caracas on the GOBRV's announcement that it had been unaware of the agreement that, it claimed, had been brokered unbeknownst to Chavez between a civil servant and the attorney of the ETA members. A December 6 MFA communique stated that no such agreement would be made, and the responsible civil servant would be fired. Spanish media attributed the Venezuelan about-face to strenuous lobbying by Spanish Ambassador to Caracas Raul Morodo.

¶4. (U) The four ETA-members who were to receive citizenship are Eugenio Barrutiabengoa, Lorenzo Ayestaran, Jesus Ricardo Urteaga, and Miguel Angel Aldana. The two members extradited in 2002 are Sebastian Etxaniz Alkorta and Juan Victor Galarza. A 1990 extradition agreement between Venezuela and Spain stipulates that either nation may refuse to extradite a suspect if the suspect is a nationalized citizen.

//COMMENT//

15. (C) Spanish authorities have been working for years to win the extradition of certain ETA members in Venezuela (other "retired" ETA members are in Venezuela with the agreement of the Spanish government). While Ministry of Justice sources have previously insisted that the problems were technical in nature and related to inefficiencies in the Venezuelan justice system, this incident will feed suspicion in many quarters here that Chavez is aiding active ETA members.  
Llorens